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## POCAHONTAS COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR

In the year 1861 the clouds of War hung over our Country; their deep den<sup>l</sup>ity hung over Virginia which at that time included West Virginia. Civil commotion shook the grand old Commonwealth.

Everywhere they enlisted in their native state; from the tide washed shores, from the midland counties and from the rock ribbed Alleghenies, long lines of brave soldiers marched forth to battle and die upon a hundred crimson fields. Among them were many of the descendents of the first pioneers of Pocahontas County who a century before had struggled with the fierce and relentless barbarians and had at last driven him from the country in which they had founded their homes, where the soldiers of a later day were born and reared.

When the tocsin of War sounded throughout their native mountains volunteering began. Andrew G. McKeel repaired to the Little Levels and organized the first company. This was early in the spring of 1861. A requisition was made for arms and they were shipped from Richmond, but were never received and the company disbanded in the fall of that same year.

Captain D. A. Stofer mustered a company at Huntersville, went south and with it was attached to the 31st Virginia Infantry.

John M. Lightner was first Lieutenant in this Company from Huntersville.

The third Company formed was that of Captain Arbogast at Greenbank. It too, was attached to the 31st Virginia Infantry. Captain Arbogast was afterward promoted to Major of the regiment. Lieutenant H. M. Poague of Pocahontas County but serving in a Bath County Company was killed in action at Warrenton Virginia, October 12 1863.

Lieutenant James McLaughlin, of Captain Stofer's Company from Huntersville was wounded at Snepherdstown and died at Winchester, Virginia. The loss was considerable on both sides. Among that of the Confederates was that of Captain Anderson of the Lynchburg Artillery and Captain J. C. Whitmer of the Pocahontas Rifles.

In the Civil War the first engagement which occurred in Pocahontas County was at Camp Bartow on what is known as the Peter Yeager farm known as Traveler's Repose. Late in the summer of 1861 a Confederate force was collected at this point. It consisted of the first Georgia Infantry, Col. Ramsey commanding; the twelfth Georgia, Colonel Edward Johnson in command; the 31st Virginia Infantry, Colonel William L. Jackson and Colonel Hansbro's Battalion; the Churchville Cavalry from Churchville, Augusta County, commanded by the Captain J. C. McNutt; the entire force under the command of General Henry L. Jackson.

On the 14th of September, 1861, this force<sup>was</sup> attacked by the Federals under command of Generals Reynolds and Rosecrans.

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The firing began early in the morning and continued until night-fall when the Federals withdrew and fell back to Cheat Mountain summit. The Confederate loss was thirty-six killed. That of the Federals unknown. A few days later the Confederates fell back to Camp Allegheny, and after being reinforced by two regiments, one of which was the 52nd Virginia Infantry, under Colonel John Baldwin, they fortified a strong natural position. Here in December they were again attacked by the Federals and the engagement continued throughout the day, but terminated as had the first, in the repulse of the Federals.

BATTLE OF RICH MOUNTAIN

On the 23rd day of June 1861 General McClellan assumed command of the Federal forces in Western Virginia and began a series of movements which met with no successful resistance until the ~~Federals~~ <sup>Confederates</sup> were compelled to retreat beyond the mountains. He marched against General Pegrim who with a force of 4000 infantry had taken up a strong position on Rich Mountain which is also known by that name in Pocahontas County. Pegrim sent 2500 men and a battery of artillery to resist the advance of Rosecrans. They were the first to reach the top of the Mountain and here the Federals were greeted by a discharge of Artillery and their advance checked. Soon they were reinforced by an Indiana regiment. A charge was made along the entire line. The Confederates fell back and at once began a hasty retreat.

The mountain was strewn with the dead and the wounded,

150 being buried on the field. Pegrim finding no way of escape a few days later surrendered his entire forces prisoners of war.

General R. E. Lee in West Virginia.

General ~~R. E.~~ Lee, the ablest officer in Virginia, marched at the head of 9000 men against General Reynolds who was lying with a considerable force at Cheat Mountain. The attack was made on the 14th of September and after several hours severe fighting Lee was forced to retreat, leaving 100 dead upon the field.

Among the dead was Colonel John Washington, a recent proprietor of Mount Vernon. Lee's army halted on the banks of the Greenbrier river and began to entrench itself. General Reynolds, after receiving re-enforcements set out on the 2nd of October from Cheat Mountain with a force of 5000 men to drive Lee from his position. Colonel Kimball with the 14th Indiana led the advance while General Milroy, with a portion of his brigade was to deploy to the left, drive in the pickets and force the Confederates within the entrenchments.

At daylight he/ arrived at Greenbrier bridge and found it occupied. A charge was made, the bridge carried and a crossing effected. Then began an artillery duel which fairly shook the surrounding mountains. Soon three of Lee's guns were disabled and he again retreated. The Federal Loss was eight killed and thirty-two wounded. Lee left General Johnson of Georgia with 2000 men on the summit of the Alleghenies,

*Greenbrier Bridge was the old covered bridge at Marlinton*

*Robert R. ...*

and continued his march to Staunton. Milroy marched against Johnson, taking with him the 13th Indiana and two other regiments. On the 15th of December he reached Camp Allegheny where he found the Confederates strongly fortified.

An engagement took place, the results of which were not advantageous to either side, the loss being 130 on both sides. Milroy withdrew and fell back to Cheat Mountain.

*Rolls & Graces  
Pocahontas Co -*

Above all taken from Hardesty's Encyclopedia.

Pocahontas

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Historic battlefield converted into State Park.

A vivid description of Droop Mt Battle from pen of Andrew Price

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## Vivid Description of Droop Mountain Battle Reprinted From Pen of Andrew Price

### Historic Battlefield Is Converted Into State Park

On a bleak day last November, State and National officials together with a large group of State citizens gathered at the Droop Mountain battlefield in Pocahontas County—72 years after Union forces routed the Confederate cavalry from the field—to dedicate the site of that conflict as a State park.

Private George Alderson of the 14th Virginia Cavalry went to the celebration from the hills of Nicholas County to accept the new State park as a memorial to his comrades who fell there. The boys in blue were absent. The last member of the G. A. R. in the Pocahontas section died last March so a World War veteran accepted the flag in their behalf.

This dedication—and renewed interest in the site together with its historical background—brings to mind the colorful description of the famous Droop Mountain encounter as chronicled by the late Andrew Price, famed State newspaperman and one of the first honored with a place in the West Virginia Publishers' Hall of Fame. Price was for many years editor of the Pocahontas Times, now edited by his brother, Cal Price.

His narrative of the battle follows:

The campaign in 1863, in West Virginia, on the Federal side, was under the command of Gen. W. W. Averell, of the Fourth Separate Brigade. He had at his disposal some five thousand troops and he was opposed to an army of about the same strength. The campaign in the mountains has been ignored by historians generally, the broken country of high hills and narrow valleys prevented the maneuvering of large bodies of troops, but it was no less important than the vast armies on the tidewater plains, for West Virginia was a barrier between the North and the South that the government must hold at all hazards. The Federal forces had met with disaster until Averell took charge in the spring of 1863. He was a New Yorker, a West Pointer, country-bred and efficient. He had won his spurs in subduing the Kiowa nation. He could move his troops faster than any other commander, unless it was "Stonewall" Jackson, of the Confederate army.

When he came to West Virginia, the first thing he did was to mount his infantry upon horses and after that he was able to move his army with great rapidity and he moved up and down the long valleys on either side of the Allegheny at will. He was in many engagements, but the great battle was that of Droop

Mountain, thirty-four miles from Lewisburg and that if he drove his enemy forward that day that they would get by Lewisburg before Duffie would have arrived from Kanawha.

On Thursday then about all that was done was to try to go around the Confederates and cut them off from the mountain, but Jackson beat them to it and left the Levels to be occupied by Averell.

#### Stays With Confederates

Averell made his headquarters camp along the hill on the western edge of the Levels about where Gen. M. J. McNeal, of the Confederate veterans, resides. Averell, himself, was the guest of Col. Paul McNeal that night, and the whole community was Confederate but all who met him were charmed by him.

When the Levels was a lake Droop Mountain was the dam. The Greenbrier forced a passage through along the extreme eastern side and still plunges through the pass. Last summer the road commission blocked this road just as the army did in '63, and we who desired to march south had to either go down the river road on the right or to the left and climb the ridge and swing round the circle by way of Lobella and climb up the road that intersects the pike on top of the mountain back of the battlefield. They call these Hobson Choice detours these days.

#### Averell Detoured

So Averell detoured. Like "Stonewall" Jackson, he was an early riser, and he got his troops into position before daylight. Here is the way he laid out his attack:

He sent the 14th Pennsylvania to the left and they took up their stand near the Locust Creek bridge and appeared to be ready to charge up the mountain. Keeper's battery was placed on the high ground above Beard's mill and commenced to fire on the batteries on top of the mountain. Several families living in the low place formed by Locust creek stayed there all day under the artillery fire. Ewing's battery was placed to the left pike between Hillsboro and the foot of Droop Mountain. Gibson's battalion and the 10th West Virginia were held in or near Hillsboro on the pike. The 2nd, 3rd, and 8th West Virginia regiments were placed to the right of the pike about the Renick place, out of sight of the Confederates on top of the mountain. The 28th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and one company of the 14th Pennsylvania, in all 1,175 men, were sent by the long way and were to the right by Lobella and when they started long before daylight they did not reach the mountain until 1:45 p. m. In the afternoon a great deal of cannonading had been going on.



**at Lewisburg**

the first week of November, he ordered General Duffie to march on Saturday, November 7 at 2 p. m. and Duffie marched from Kanawha, 120 miles. Averell from Beverly road had 110 miles to go. Averell reached Lewisburg on Saturday, November 7, at 7 p. m. and found that Duffie had got there at 10 a. m. Sunday they started from Beverly and came over Cheat Mountain by way of Cheat Bridge, and marched by Camp Bartow, where they left the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike and took the road leading by Greenbank to Huntersville. Outside of some apprehension from brushwhackers, they saw no sign of the rebel army until they got to Greenbank and from there one they drove the pickets before them.

**Reach Huntersville**

They reached Huntersville on Wednesday at noon and there Averell heard that Col. W. P. Thompson, with the 19th Virginia cavalry, was at Marlins Bottom, at the Greenbrier bridge. Huntersville was the county seat, and while the pike between the Levels and the county seat ran by Marlins Bottom where the river was bridged, all persons attending court on horseback from the Levels, when the river could be forded turned to left at Stephen Hole Run and rode by the Beaver Creek route. They saved by this about six miles—the distance from Marlins Bottom to Huntersville. Marlins Bottom is now called Marlinton. So on Wednesday there was a horse race. Averell sent the 14th Pennsylvania cavalry and the 3rd West Virginia Mounted Infantry down Beaver Creek to cut off Thompson at Stephen Hole Run, and sent the 2nd and 8th West Virginia mounted Infantry to Marlinton with Ewing's battery, but Thompson left in a hurry and out a barricade of trees across the road on Price Hill, and beat the Federals to Stephen Hole Run and joined up with the Confederate troops in the Levels and there turned and stopped the advance. Averell, at Huntersville, got word in the night time from his command at Marlinton and from Stephen Hole Run, that Thompson had escaped the trap.

**Join at Mill Point**

Averell moved his Huntersville army down Beaver Creek, Thursday, starting at 3 a. m., and reaching Mill Point at 8 a. m. He had ordered the colonel in charge of the Marlinton army to cut out the barricade and join him at Mill Point, and both wings of the army arrived at the same time. The effect of this was to put the Confederates in motion and they retired from the plains around Hillsboro to the heights overlooking that town, and erected embankments and fortifications on the brow of the mountains overlooking the Levels where the pike tops the mountain going south. It is exactly at the point that the tourist having traveled north through the three miles of sand on the flat top of Droop Mountain, comes in sight all at once of the garden spot of West Virginia spread out some fifteen hundred feet below him. It is a breath taking experience.

Averell says that the reason that he did not attack on Thursday when he came upon the Confederates in the Levels was that he was

**Retreat**

I imagine that something occurred during the slow marching hours that caused Averell the gravest apprehension. He had not attacked the day before for good and sufficient reasons but about 9 o'clock the Confederates announced by cheers, and by band music, and by the display of battle flags, that Major General Echols had brought his army up and that the forces were equal and that the Confederates held a safe position.

I have given the position of the Federal troops, occupying a full half circle to the north of the battlefield. Here is the way the Confederates were stationed:

**Gives Locations**

On the river road to Greenbrier: Edgar's battalion. On the farm-land on the brow of the mountain where the battle was fought: 2nd Virginia cavalry, Col. George Patton; 19th Virginia cavalry, Col. W. P. Thompson; 20th Virginia Cavalry, Col. W. W. Arnett; 14th Virginia cavalry, Col. James Cochran; Derrick's battalion; Jackson's batteries. On the Lobella-Jacob road: Nobody. The failure to guard the road leading in from the rear cost the Confederates the battle. This oversight has never been explained.

At 1:45 p. m. the flanking party arrived and came through the woods firing as they came and the rifle balls fell everywhere. It is said to have been one of the most sudden and most fearful fires that men were ever subject to. In about an hour, the Confederates were in full flight.

As soon as Averell heard his flanking party commence to fire he moved the 2nd, 3rd, and 8th regiments obliquely to the right up the mountain. The horses had been left at the foot of the mountain. They came out on top of the mountain exactly on the left of the flanking army and together they advanced on the breastworks of the Confederates and the fight was over in a few minutes, and the army in full retreat. Averell sent Gibson's battalion after them up the pike, together with one section of Ewing's battery. But parts of all the regiments joined in the pursuit, and Averell was able to halt his command on the top of Spring Creek Mountain, overlooking the Big Levels of Greenbrier. This was the evening after the battle, Friday, November 6, 1863.

**Successful in Retreat**

He tried to hold back the pursuit so that Duffie might cut them off at Lewisburg, but that was not to be. They got through Lewisburg and on towards Union on the way to Dublin, by a matter of minutes, and were able to cut a timber blockade in the road.

We Confederates never had any luck in West Virginia after the battle of Droop Mountain. It was a losing fight from that time on. We had given Averell a defeat at White Sulphur Springs the summer before, but with that exception, Averell never lost a game. He was allowed to continue in command until the 23rd day of September, 1864, with the most brilliant record for success and efficiency that was ever accorded to a general in a campaign, when

for no reason, so far as history can discover, he was summarily dismissed from his command. He openly charged that it was to make room for some favorite in the make-up of the army.

**Quits Command**

His last official communication to his command closed with these words: "I would rather serve in your ranks than leave you, but I am only permitted to say farewell."

During his command with the Confederate rangers lasting from May 16, 1863, to September 23, 1864, he fought twenty battles.

That is the outline of the Battle of Droop Mountain. We most earnestly insist that if this sketch is in any way in error that the historian or veteran will immediately write to us and we will argue it out.

Here is the program that would have been presented to an observer standing on the brow of the mountain on the battlefield just before the battle began: To the east, 14th Pennsylvania regiment, to the west, Cooper's battery, to the north, Ewing's battery, the 8th West Virginia, and Gibson's battalion; to the north-west, both of the timber and in the woods and hollows of the land, the 2nd, 3rd and 8th West Virginia regiments, hung on their arms, were both men holding horses, all waiting for the sound of battle which the 7th Ohio and the company of cavalry were ordered upon the rear.

Behind all the Levels homes were occupied that day by the women and children. Many of the men were in the mountains, many were in the valleys.

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